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IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A business method for providing a payer with access to digital medical image data generated by up to a plurality of imaging facilities to a payer, the business method comprising the steps of:

receiving digital medical image data generated by the imaging facilities using a gateway at each imaging facility;

transmitting the received digital medical image data from the gateway to a central server via a network and storing the digital medical image data at the central server; and

providing the payer with access to the stored digital medical image data via the network to the payer for a fee; and

forwarding access to the stored digital medical image data to an individual other than the payer, wherein access is forwarded to the other individual by the payer and the other individual is thereafter granted access to the stored digital medical image data.

2. (Original) A business method according to Claim 1, wherein the digital medical image data is transmitted from the gateway to the central server using an authenticated session over a secure protocol.

3. (Original) A business method according to Claim 1, wherein the network is the Internet.

4. (Original) A business method according to Claim 1, wherein the central server is remote from both the imaging facilities and the payer.

5. (Original) A business method according to Claim 1, further comprising the step of determining if the digital medical image data received by the gateway is associated with the payer,

wherein only digital medical image data determined to be associated with the payer is transmitted to the central server and stored.

6. (Original) A business method according to Claim 1, wherein the digital medical image data is received by the gateway using a DICOM protocol.

7. (Original) A business method according to Claim 1, wherein the digital medical image data is transmitted to the central server and stored in the same format as it was received by the gateway.

8. (Original) A business method according to Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

receiving a report corresponding to digital medical image data generated by the imaging facilities and stored at the central server; and
storing the report at the central server,
wherein the payer is provided access to the report via the network for a fee.

9. (Original) A business method according to Claim 8, wherein the report is encrypted and transmitted to the central server via the network using an authenticated and secure communication session.

10. (Currently Amended) A business method according to Claim 8, further comprising the step of providing an interface for the payer to ~~control forward access to for both of~~ the stored digital medical image data and ~~the~~ corresponding reports ~~via the network for individuals besides the payer to the other individual.~~

11. (Original) A business method according to Claim 8, further comprising the step of recording access to the stored digital medical image data and corresponding reports,

wherein access records are provided to the payer via the network for digital medical image data and corresponding reports associated with the payer.

12. (Original) A business method according to Claim 1, where access to the stored digital medical image data and corresponding reports is provided using a web-based viewer.

Please add Claims 13 to 15, as follows:

13. (New) A business method according to Claim 1, further comprising the step of notifying the other individual that access has been forwarded to him, together with information on how to access it.

14. (New) A business method according to Claim 1, wherein the other individual is granted access for a limited time.

15. (New) A business method according to Claim 1, wherein there are limitations on the power of the payer to forward access to other individuals.